

Interview Log

Interviewee: John W. Freeman, Sr. Tape #: n{e- la(,

Interviewer: Virginia Jenkins # of Tapes: 1
Pete Leshner
Tom Howell

Date: September 27, 1999 # of Sides: 2

Location: Hampton, Virginia

Topic: Workboat Foodways Project
Crew on Old Point

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: Mr. Leshner and Mr. Howell were not identified in this tape, yet both spoke. I have guessed which voice belongs to whom and tried to be consistent throughout. If the speaker identification is not correct, a search and replace would be a quick fix. Phonetic Spellings: Benny Grim

BEGIN SIDE A

T. H.: For the benefit of the tape, we're interviewing waterman Pete (sic) Freeman. This is September 27, 1999, and interviewing are Pete Leshner, Virginia Jenkins and Tom Howell. Could you -- you have experience with Old Point. Could you tell us how you got involved?

J.F.: Well how I got involved was my dad. Back them days, times were tight, so I had to go to school. We had -- I had four brothers and three sisters, and \$12 a week or \$14 a week, we just couldn't survive. So daddy asked me to quit school to go on the Old Point with him so we could help -- to help him. So what I did, I worked and gave him all my money except \$1. I kept \$1 a week, that's all I kept. And I did that for three years on that boat, on that one boat, to just help the family out. And then -- but the Old Point was a unique boat. You know, during the time when I was working aboard then, early days, it wasn't you go out at 7, 8:00 in the morning and get back at 3, 4:00 in the afternoon. You'd leave at 4:00 in the morning and get back at 9:00 at night. Because those old boats was slow, and you was crabbing way over the Eastern Shore and Back River Stone Pile, and Lynhaven and places like that. You just couldn't make no time.

But the main -- some of the things that really happened to me out there that I can tell you about was we worked in the stone piles a lot. And a lot of stone in a shovel will get you down in a hurry. But I've seen a time that we would work all day long with a shovel, shoveling stone to catch 25, 30 crabs every lake. And every lake, I'm saying every lake now, every lake was coming -- one would be coming one way while the other one was going out. And it was just one side to the other side, one side to the other side. And I mean that's all they -- and then we would -- dredge lunch time, dinner time, and hang it and stop and go eat. Take 30 minutes and everybody would go eat. Either have -- most times we fry our crabs or fish or whatever. We never bring nothing from home. We always caught our food. But all we brought was bread. And sometimes we didn't even bring that, we'd make it. 'Cause my dad was a good cook, and I cooked too. I did a lot of cooking. But we -- it's just an ordinary waterman's hard life.

V.J.: What was your father's name?

J.F.: Thomas L. Freeman. Call him Tommy. And he worked 65 years. He worked on the water and raised seven children.

P.L.: Are you the oldest one?

J.F.: I'm the oldest in the family.

P.L.: That's why he asked you to go crabbing?

J.F.: Yeah. I was the oldest one. And then after them three years, I went back to school. Things picked up a little bit, and I went back to school and got my education. Then I got back in the water business after that. And I worked daytime waterman, nighttime on the job. I worked on the job shipyard and still gave my money to my parents to help 'em. I worked in a shipyard for 22 years, nighttime, and worked crabbing in the daytime. Just to help the family out 'til I got married. When I got married, I was 18 years old. So then I got married, I had to change my ways a little bit. But the experience I had on the Old Point and Captain Ernie was -- Captain Ernie was a fine old fellow. And he didn't joke around too much. He would tell you point blank, I want this done, and you do it. You either do it or he'd get somebody else. You go up the road. But I never had no problem with him. He would pick us up on Monday morning. We never went home. We stayed on the boat all week. Never go home. Sleep, you had a place to sleep in the engine room. I slept in the engine room.

My dad slept up in the forepeak in the bow where the cooking stuff was at, and he slept -- Captain Ernie slept in the pilot house. But we never went home until the weekend and carry our \$14 home. I didn't carry but \$1. But that dollar then would buy more than 25 would right now. I could take that \$1 and dress, catch a bus from Messick, from Poquoson, come back to Hampton. Catch a streetcar from Hampton down to Buckrow Beach and go to an amusement park or do things, you know, do things in Hampton and different places and still have 50 cent left. I mean things was different than it is now. When my boys came up, I give 'em a couple dollars, and they wouldn't even go out the door unless they had five. But things then was cheap.

Another thing, you know, we could go to the store, me and my sister, my oldest sister, we would go to the store for my dad. And we'd go to, it's a little grocery store there, we'd carry two red wagons, and we'd take \$10. Two red wagons. And you load those things completely and all you could carry in your arms for \$10. So things have really changed a lot. But I got hurt one time on the Old Point. Stone went on my foot, mashed my foot. But all I do was just wrap it up, put some

ice onto it, plenty coal then too, then go on back to work.

P.L.: How big were the stones you were dredging on? Big stones?

J.F.: Some of 'em you couldn't get overboard. We'd have to take the falls, we had a block and tackle on the mast and lift them up. We rolled 'em, rolled 'em into a little kind of a sack-like thing, you know, and hook to and life 'em up and pull the strings and let 'em go. I've seen --we caught some you couldn't get off. We had to bring 'em to a dock. Then they'd have to haul them off. And get four or five people to get 'em off. But there's some big rocks out there.

P.L.: Did you ever find anything besides stone, like maybe cannonballs or anything like that?

J.F.: Yeah, we've caught a lot of cannonballs. I've caught a lot of bottles, old bottles and stuff like that. I've got about five or six bushels of old bottles in my garage, up in the attic. Some day I'm going to go through 'em and get rid of 'em. But you catch a lot of stuff, a lot of things. And a lot of different kinds of fish. It gets -- you'd be surprised what you catch in the Chesapeake Bay. I'm telling you. I've caught a lot of live ammunition too, bombs and everything else. Caught a whole box of 50-gallon machine gun bullets one time. Whole box of 'em, the whole box.

P.L.: Tin box?

J.F.: Yeah, little metal box, still full. Them things were still live. Most of 'em had tracer bullets into 'em. Some of 'em was tracer. Every 10 bullets was a tracer. Now tracer you have to watch 'cause they will explode on you. But we would just throw them back in the water or either bring them ashore and give 'em to the coast guard or somebody like that come get 'em. But I caught a lot of 'em last year. I dredge in the wintertime now on my boat. I got a steering rig now. And I caught a lot of 'em last year. Had to call the Coast Guard to come get it. I was a little bit scared of it because it started spewing foam. And I got a little bit leery. But I, you know, the Old Point was just a plain boat just like everybody else's boat. But most time you have to take a hand pump, pump her out. You didn't have electric pumps like you got now. Get a little bit of water into it, and get too much in, you get a couple five-gallon buckets and start bailing.

P.L.: Did you ever lose a dredge?

J.F.: No, we never did lose one.

P.L.: Did you ever carry spare dredges or different styles?

J.F.: Yeah, he carried a spare. Front of the mast, tied it there, but we

never lost one.

P.L.: Did the dredges have different styles of teeth and stuff in 'em, or were they always the same, all the same?

J.F.: All the same.

P.L.: All the same?

J.F.: Yeah. Dredges, all the same. But we never lost one. I've lost 'em since I've been dredging. But then you had good chain. Now the chain you buy is proof chain. And you hit a hanger or something, you can snap it.

P.L.: Were you dredging with chain all the way to the dredge?

J.F.: Yeah.

P.L.: Instead of wire?

J.F.: Used cable, used 7/16 chain, which is heavy.

P.L.: The only crab dredge boat that I was on was the Florence Marie. I don't know whether you --

J.F.: Yeah, I know her. Yeah.

P.L.: I was down inside of her, and I noticed that her drums were wrapped with chain, and it came all the way out. So I didn't know whether that was the standard.

J.F.: Yeah, 250 foot of chain on there. That's what I use now. I use 300 foot of chain on my boat 'cause I got a duffel rig goes over the stern line, and two dredges. I got two dredges tied together. I got two six-foot dredges behind my boat. They're not like the old style, you know, one on each side. We have two shackled together.

P.L.: Do you have a crew with you every day to --

J.F.: One man. That's all you need.

P.L.: So two of you can get them on the boat?

J.F.: Oh, yeah. I got a wench. Wench 'em on the boat. Wench right up on the boat, and all you got to do is dump 'em. Set 'em back up on the roller, and let 'em go, go on overboard. Easy. It's all hydraulics now. Ain't like the old rigs. All hydraulic. You hit a little button, lift things up, do what you got to do. Things have changed. We had lift up everything by hand. Everything was done by hand. Not like it is now. I press a button now. I can -- my crab pots, I used to pull crab pots by hand. I don't do that no more. I just put it into the little thing, hit the button, she's gone. Pull her right up. Set her on the side of the boat, the man dumps it, and that's it. But boy, I tell you when you had to pull 'em by hand, though, you knew it when you got home. Had a lot of (indiscernible) in the bottom of your hands.

But I'm in a rig. I was -- smart one. I took and put me a cleat up by my cabin, and I pick the buoy up and I run to the cleat, put the buoy around the cleat, and get the boat. You can get on ahead and the pot come up by the stern, pick the pot up. I didn't pull it by hand. And everybody caught on to it, everybody started doing the same way. And then the pot puller came out 1973, I think, '73. I still got, I'm still same one I'm using, 1973.

P.L.: Hydraulic?

J.F.: Yeah, hydraulic. Osco Pot Puller. Kept good care of it too. It's all in my legs now. I'm just trying to think of anything that really happened to us out there. Oh, yeah, one -- yeah, I can tell you something happened to us one time. We were going across, by Old Point, by the Chamberlain Hotel. And I was in the forepeak, my dad was in the forepeak. And all at once, we heard a ship blowing.

Captain Ernie had gone back to the engine room, to check the engine or something and left the wheel, wheel up there with a tie rope onto it, you know, so she wouldn't swerve. Ship come down on top of us, and we were right broadside the ship. The Old Point hit the side of the ship. That's how close we was. And that ship was blowing. I come out, boy, and wheeled that wheel as much as I could. And Captain Ernie still down at the bottom at the engine room, and we were right there beside the ship just like this. And I tell you one thing, that was a scary time.

P.L.: Close call.

J. F.: Man that was close. I happened to hear him blowing. But we were going right across the bow. He'd have cut us in half. And Captain Ernie went down to check the oil in the engine, check something in the engine room, and we was up in the forepeak. But boy, I tell you one thing. I never did get in the forepeak no more after that. I stayed back around the pilot house. If anybody was going in the engine room, I'd go in the engine room. The captain would stay in the pilot house. That's dangerous.

P.L.: Do you remember what kind of an engine was in the Old Point back then when you were working on her?

J.F.: We had -- the first engine had was an old Palmer --

P.L.: Gasoline?

J. F.: -- the kind you crank on by hand. Yeah, gasoline. And that was the first one he had. But then he's changed it since 671 the old Gray Marines later on, 1940, '41. I think the first one was built in '41. I got

one in the back was built in 1941. Them old Gray Marine engines. If you ever need any parts, let me know. I got plenty of old parts around here for a 671, 671, the old Grays. I got two of 'em back there. Two little, plenty of junk around here.

P.L.: How long did you work on Old Point?

J.F.: I worked on there three years when I first started. I went back on in later years, but it was after I went to school, got out of school. I worked on her three years straight. And then I went on the Edna L.

P.L.: Did you only work on her during the crab-dredging season?

J.F.: Yeah. I didn't go on her when he was running fish. He used to run fish with her in the summertime. No, I didn't go on her then. I was working with my dad then crabbing. He had an old boat to go trot lining. We had trot line then. Didn't have no crab pots then, had trot line. And I'd go with him.

P.L.: How long did your father work for him?

J.F.: My dad worked for him about 20 years, about 25 years, I reckon. He worked for him a long time. He was -- Captain Ernie always thought a lot of dad, and dad thought a lot of him. And every Christmas, he gave him a bonus, every Christmas. And that be \$10. Man, that was a big bonus then, \$10. Now a \$10 bill don't look like nothing.

P.L.: Can't even go to McDonald's.

J.F.: You're right. But I don't know, any question you want to ask, I can answer.

T.H.: You slept back in the engine room.

J.F.: Yeah.

T.H.: What was the berth back in there like? Wasn't it a fairly low --

J.F.: I don't know if you still got the pilothouse on there, the exhaust came out like this and was spread up in the back part of the pilot house. Not the top pilot house, but the little part of the pilot house. Well the bunk was right behind the exhaust.

T.H.: Crossways?

J.F.: It's a spring. Yeah, crossways this way. And what we do when we're sleeping into it, we hinged it up and set it up against the back of the wall. It was always warm back there.

T.H.: So it was like a pipe berth?

J.F.: Yeah. Just a regular old steel bed, and we had a mattress onto it, and it would hinge up, on the ends, and you could lock it up.

T.H.: See that pilot house has been changed.

J.F.: It has?

T. H.: They just extended, where that was a low pilot house, they extend it all the way to the stern. Her deck was only that big on her.

J. F.: Oh.

T.H.: But that's all off of her now, and we're going to put it back the way these pictures are. We've already had 'em drawn up.

J. F.: Because see, right back here, we had a fuel tank back here. That's a fuel tank. Right back in here is where my bunk was at, right on that wall back there.

T.H.: See the pilot house that's been on her for the last 20 years came all the way back there. In fact, it came right out from under that cabin top, that window was inside. Big ugly thing.

J.F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). This used to be a door. This was a door on each side.

T. H.: Is that how you got into your berth?

J. F.: Yeah, in the engine room.

T.H.: You got from that through that outside door.

J.F.: Had a door on each side. A door on this side, a door on the other side. Just had two little panes into it, little window panes, all it had.

V.J.: Can you tell me what the forepeak was like? How was it laid out?

J.F.: On the forepeak, they had the --I don't know if they got the hatch up there now or not. They had around hatch up there. The hatch was made come up straight up like this, and then the door would be in the front, and then you roll over like this around. For that reason, water would ride off of it. And you had twin doors on it, one on each side, and you'd open it up, and you'd go right down the steps, you'd go down the steps, then you'd have the stove, had the stove over here and you had a table on the opposite side. Then you have a bunk all the way up to the bow for the cook. And a smoke stack came up in here. You see the stack right here. And the stove was right at -- as you go down the ladder, the stove was right there. Then you had a table there where everybody eat at. There's a table that was set up, the old hinges, it would lift up and you'd hook it and all then -- kept on sawing and sawing like that. They always had little notches cut out into a piece of board to set them in so they wouldn't roll around. Everything was secured so it wouldn't roll around.

V.J.: What kind of stove was it?

J. F.: It was a -- we used a wood stove, just a regular old small wood stove. And we chopped our own wood. He'd bring the wood down in barrels. We'd chop it up in little pieces. And then in later years, they'd use a fuel oil stove, you know.

P.L.: Did they?

J. F.: Yeah, regular fuel oil stove, had the blower onto 'em. They finally came out with them in, I think, about '45, something like that. But we used to carry a lot of wood to keep warm. Yeah, regular fuel oil stove, had the blower onto 'em. They finally came out with them in, I think, about '45, something like that. But we used to carry a lot of wood to keep warm.

V.J.: Where did you keep the wood?

J. F.: The wood was just --they kept the wood right behind the stove, right down behind the stove, right directly behind and in here. See, we'd bring enough wood to last a week. That's all you'd bring 'cause you didn't have nowhere to put it. Couldn't put it in the hole where the chain was at because the water was down there all the time to keep it wet. And you couldn't put it in the engine room 'cause didn't have enough room to put it, so we'd have to put it right in there where the stove was at. But we'd chop it up little small pieces. But I tell you one thing, that was lightening wood, it would barely heat the cabin up. Didn't have heat back here, but the engine kept it warm back there. Didn't have to have no stove. And up here, see, had the exhaust coming up there so keep the pilot house warm too. See it came to the pilot -- the exhaust came out of the pilot, down through this way, and came back this way to keep both compartments warm, exhaust. And this little -- they all got that pole still back there, this top pole here?

P.L.: Yeah.

J.F.: That's where we had the back light at, on top of that pole.

Vi.: Were there cupboards and storage spaces in the forepeak for food?

J.F.: Oh, yeah, yeah. For canned food. She had lockers in there. Like go down the side of the boat there, you'd have long lockers going around this way, and it would be sitting there. And then you'd have a hinged door onto it. You lift it up to put your food inside of that on both sides. That's where you set at most time was them lockers to eat. Didn't have chairs or nothing.

T.H.: The food storage was underneath the seats, the benches?

J.F.: Oh, yeah. Underneath the seats, yeah. Underneath the

benches.

T. H.: And there were berths up there as well?

J. F.: One.

T. H.: One.

J. F.: One.

T. H.: That's where your father slept.

J. F.: Yeah, that's where he slept.

T. H.: Was that a fold-down, or was it just on the bench?

J. F.: You can pull it down. What he did, it was on the opposite side of the stove, or the table, and it hinged up just like it did, and just hinge it down, go to sleep, then hinge it back up so you have room, 'cause it wasn't much room up there.

P.L.: And the one in the pilot house, that was a fold-up one too?

J.F.: No. That one was a bunk type. It had a bunk type, and he would just crawl up into it. What it did, it was built up over top the engine. And the bunk was just a bunk-type on top of there. That's where he kept all his papers at, and all his money and whatever. I'd like to have a picture of this sometime. I'd like to find mine. I got one too somewhere, but mine is in color, the one I got.

P.L.: You could probably give him a picture like that.

T. H.: Yeah, we can make a copy for you.

J.F.: I got one somewhere. If I find it, I'll send you all one of mine.

They got a double smoke stack on, keep the draft from coming back down inside the boat.

P. L.: So when you were dredging, you put the dredge over. You remember how long -- well, of course, you were doing it every day, but how long do you drag the dredge before you pull it up?

J.F.: Well it depends on where you're at and what you're doing. If you're back in the stone pile, you don't drag it very far. You drag it about maybe two, three minutes, four minutes. But if you're not in there, on a clean bottom, you can drag it for 10, 12 minutes. Like I do right now, I drag mine, if I'm on clean bottom, I drag it about 10 minutes. On real bad bottom, I have to pull it about every five minutes 'cause it fills up so bad.

P.L.: Do the crabs go down in the mud or sand or whatever in the wintertime?

J. F.: They go so deep, you can't get to 'em.

P. L.: They do?

J.F.: Yeah. We have six-inch teeth in those dredges when they're

new, brand new. And the crab will go below that. They'll go below six inches in the bottom. And in the spring, in other words, from the 15th day of February, they'll start moving, they'll start coming back up. Then you start catch -- January is the worst month. January to the 15th of February, that's when they're real deep. That's when they bury so deep you can't get to 'em. And you cut a lot of 'em, cut a lot of top shells. But the 15th of February, they start rising again, and they'll start wiggling themselves, and make themselves back up to the top, catch a few more, then don't cut 'em up as bad. Then by the 15th of March, they're all up on top then, unless you have a snow storm. Have a snow storm, the snow pulls from out of the bottom. The first snow sends 'em in the bottom. The second snow pulls 'em out of the bottom. Why that is, I don't know. But it pulls 'em out and it kills 'em. We lose a lot of 'em, real bad winter.

P.L.: You never put deeper teeth on the dredges?

J.F.: No. It's against the law. You only can use a six-inch tooth. And you wouldn't want it longer no way because you pull the side of the boat up, pull it over top the roller 'cause you have to have some kind of way to jump over top that steel roller. Get 'em too long, they won't come over, you'll pull the whole roll right off the side of the boat. But it's a six-inch standard tooth and a six-foot dredge. And seven foot dredge, and eight foot dredge. We got three size dredges now.

P.L.: They weigh (inaudible).

J.F.: Oh, yeah. Yeah. My dredge ways about 350 pounds, I guess, total, 400 pounds. Sometimes I put too many blades into 'em, and it weighed about 400 pounds.

P.L.: Blacksmith make them --

J.F.: Yeah. Gloucester Steel makes 'em for us now, Billy Jordan, up in Gloucester. He makes all the stuff on 'em now. We used to have two or three blacksmiths around here, but they all died off or gone somewhere.

T.H.: What other boats did you work on after that? How long before you had your own boat?

J.F.: I worked on the Edna L, I guess, 15 years with Willie Bradshaw. We dredged crabs in the daytime and towed sand barges (indiscernible) in the nighttime. We worked a 24-hour day. We never slept hardly. And we'd catch as high as 150 barrels of crabs a day. And then put 'em, come in, shovel 'em on trucks and send 'em down to Florida or different places, a dollar a barrel, 150 barrels a day, and

then go out and tow sand barges all night.

T.H.: And how long did you continue to work with your father, both in the --

J.F.: Well I was with him until I was able to, you know, in the summertime I worked a little bit with him, but I got me on a skiff of my own, and I did a little trot lining by myself until I got married. Then I got married, I bought my boat and then I got married, the first one. And it was a piece of junk. Had to sleep aboard it to keep it afloat. Every now and then I'd have to roll over and I'd feel water and pump it out. My first boat, let me tell you, it leaked, it leaked. I don't know what was wrong with it. I just never could stop the leaking. And I had a hand pump onto it, and I'd go to sleep. I stayed on the boat then even after I got married, I stayed on the boat, on the locker, sleep in the locker, and I'd roll over. If my hand hit the water, then I'd get up and pump it out. That's the only way I knew it had water in it.

But I seen some real tight times in the water business since I been around. Real tight. But it's been a good life. I enjoyed it. I've raised six children myself off the water business. And I got two, three of them went to college, to college. I got a granddaughter now Virginia Tech. But I just enjoyed it, I enjoy the life. I'm a hydraulic specialist. I worked the shipyard as a hydraulic specialist. I went to Westinghouse and got an engineering degree, and I served on the commission, the BMRC commission for seven years, appointed by the Governor. I did my share to help the State of Virginia, whatever. But if you ever go to the Maryland museum, you'll see me standing up there in full color. Yeah, they got a picture of me up there, a cardboard image of me standing up there with a phone. I'll tell you a little story about the Chesapeake Bay. That's the mariner's museum. I got a lot of stuff in the watermen museum in your town. A lot of different things around. Any more questions?

P.L.: Did you ever have a -- did you ever have a deck boat yourself?

J.F.: Yeah. I had the Miss Catherine.

P.L.: The Miss Catherine.

J.F.: Yeah. I bought that from a guy, and I didn't use it myself. I used it one year, but then I let somebody else run it. And then I sold it. I just couldn't keep it up, 'cause I had a boat like this too. And I just couldn't keep that one up. So I sold it to -- Benny Grim down here -- Riley Seafood. And they used it and worked it. And then they thought

had problems with it, so they finally got rid of it. They made a model of it. But that was an old boat. Built in 1901. Old. But I can get you some old dredges too if you ever need some.

P.L.: We have one. We ought to have two.

T. H.: We ought to have a couple.

J.F.: I'll get you one. I'll find you -- I'll catch one. We catch 'em out there all the time.

P. L.: We have trucks and trailers and stuff, but we need to --

J.F.: Oh, you do?

P.L.: We can come down and get one.

J.F.: Anything else you need, let me know. I can find something.

P.L.: I'll probably be in touch with you because you're still active and you know everybody around here. And we're definitely going to need winches, and probably find some old chain and stuff. Like I said, we're never going to dredge the boat, but it would be nice to have it on there so people could see --

J.F.: I just gave a -- chain away the other day, old chain. Gave it to a guy to put on his pile nets, to use for weights. If I'd know, I'd give that to you. But I'll find plenty of chain. There's plenty of chain laying around. And I'll get you some winches too. Show you how it's hooked up. You got to put a transmission in between the front of the engine and the winch to run it.

T.H.: Do the winches have clutches on them themselves?

J.F.: No. They're wood, they're wooden ones. And they got iron ones, and you lift the arm up and -- the wood. It's teak wood is what they use.

P. L.: Who makes those kind of things?

J. F.: Not no more. I don't know anybody no more. You have to make 'em your own self now.

P.L.: The oyster, the oystermen up there all use these (inaudible).

J.F.: Yeah.

P. L.: That were made in New Jersey.

J.F.: Yeah. These old style, what was on that boat was wood. They were steel, but they had a wood -- wood wedges into 'em, type of wedges, and you pull up on the arm -- put that wood against the metal to make 'em pull. They've got a little bit of grease onto 'em. Go down there and take 'em apart, clean the grease off, they slip. But I think I can find you a set of them old wooden ones. I think I know where there's a couple sets at. And if I can get a hold of 'em, I'll just get a

hold of 'em and put them in my truck and bring them home, the winch, 'cause I'm sure they're heavy. They've not light. There's a set in this old boat down here that sunk. I don't know if I can get 'em out of there or not. If they tear it in pieces, I'll get 'em out of there.

P. L.: Yeah, if they set 'em up --

J. F.: Yeah. They got the dredge post in it and everything in that boat down there.

P. L.: How big's the dredge boat?

J. F.: Dredge boat's about eight-foot tall, and this one maybe wood, that may be wood on that one. The one they got on that is steel. But this is 12 by 12 square piece of wood, oak.

P. L.: Big heavy one.

J. F.: And you put a steel strap around the top of it, and you put two eyes on each side, two on each side for to hang your locks in for the chain to come up through the deck, goes through that block. Then you have an eye going through the center of it for your hook chain, to hook your chain when you drop the dredge overboard to stop it, then you hook it, safety chain.

P. L.: See we're going to have to get with you or somebody who knows how to do all that when the time comes.

J. F.: You just let me know. I'll—

P. L.: It's going to be two or three years, I think, before we get that far.

J. F.: Well if I'm still around, I'll help you. I'll come up there and show you sometime or another, show you how it's done and bring some catch hooks and stuff like that if you're going to need to -- all this stuff, you're going to have to have. The catch hooks and everything, you're going to have to have 'em if you're going to hang -- you know, be original. As far as the square piece of wood, you can get a piece of square wood.

P. L.: We've got that.

J. F.: Just stick it right down through the deck, it goes right through the deck, and bolted down in the bottom, some partition down, hit up against the mast. Where the mast is at, when the mast comes down, you put a wedge in between that, and that post comes against that.

So it keeps it from pulling out. Is the decks on her still in good shape?

P. L.: No.

J. F.: They're not?

P. L.: She's -- we didn't bring any really good pictures, but she's totally opened up. There's nothing left. We've taken everything off of her.

Engine's gone, horn timber's gone, stern post. We're down to the bare logs.

J. F.: You've got a lot of work ahead of you. Who's going to do it?

P. L.: We do it. We have four of us in the boat shop. The pins that bolted the logs together, the drifts are all rusted away. So we're framing her like she was a framed boat, double-sawn frames, and then just bolting through into the frames to hold her together. So she's not going to be quite original. She's going to have full frames instead of just the short framing on the sides.

T. H.: But she'll be strong again, anyway, 'cause most of the logs are still good.

J. F.: Well you can cut them hunks out of the log anyway. Just cut a hunk off 'em, put a hunk in. That's what we used to do when we'd find a bad place, just take a saw and saw a big hunk out, take another big hunk in and peg it in. That's all they did. Caulk it good.

P. L.: That's what we're doing.

J. F.: But you're not going to put her back in the water anyway.

P. L.: She's going back in the water.

J. F.: Oh, she is?

P. L.: Yeah.

J. F.: You got a long ways to go. (Laughter).

P. L.: We'll get her.

J. F.: A long way to go and a lot of money to spend to get all that done. But, you know, I'd like to come down sometime or other and show you some of the things I know about the boat, help you out putting it back together.

P. L.: You know what we found. I don't know -- you probably realize it, when we took her apart, we found out that she's built out of logs all the way to the deck.

J. F.: Yeah, right.

P. L.: They're like planks, but she's eight inches thick at the deck, at the stem.

J. F.: That's right.

P. L.: She's got a real heavy bow in the water. They get thinner as they go to the stern, but they're still three or four inches thick everywhere.

J. F.: Yeah, I know. The Catherine's the same way. She was eight inches thick all the way through her. I put her on the railway and took some of the wood out of her myself and put her back together. I

worked on her for a year on the railway, finally got her back so I put her in the water. Then I put her in the water and worked her about three years, let a guy work three years, then I decided I didn't want to do it. Sold it to somebody else, let them -- they worked her quite awhile after that, but I spent a lot of money on that boat, getting it back, putting them logs in it. That's a lot of work. Any time you stick a knife into it and it goes straight on through, you better do something.

T. H.: Do you know of any of those old deck boats that are still working in crab dredging?

J.F.: I don't think it's none of them now. They've all been sold, going down south. Most of 'em is down around in the Gulf of Mexico, most of 'em are.

P. L.: Texas?

J. F.: And Texas, places like that, yeah. Sold.

P.L.: I think that's where the Florence Marie went.

J.F.: Yeah, that went down there. A whole bunch of 'em went down there. Some foreign people brought 'em down there, carry them down there, used them.

T.H.: So all the boats that are active today are these dead-rise types that drag over the stern?

J.F.: Yeah. And they got three or four boats in Tangier, got maybe a couple in Tangier Island that are still active, but they're not the log boats. They're plank boats.

T.H.: Right.

J. F.: Now you might find a couple log boats up in Deltaville, up that area somewhere. I think there's a couple up there, but I don't know if they're active or not, but I know there's some up there.

P. L.: I've heard that there's another one up there somewhere.

There's one in the museum there in Solomon's.

F.: Yeah. The one in Solomon's museum, that was a Skipjack, wasn't it originally?

TH.: A Bugeye.

J. F.: A Bugeye.

T.H.: Yeah. When did you get into doing the stern-type crab dredging?

J. F.: 1972, '73, '74.

T. H.: Seventy-four?

F.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). That's when everybody started using the boat that all the side rigs when they -- it was so much easier. You

could only hire, you didn't have to hire but one man. And you could do your pulley dredge the board, and you would have less work, the side rigs were real hard 'cause you had to shovel all the time. Stern rig, you don't have to shovel. All you do is take your hand, rake it overboard. It's open. And it made a lot of difference. And so then everybody that owned the old big boats started selling, and started going down south. Some of them, I think, went to Cuba.

A couple of them went to Cuba. A lot of them -- some of them -- one of them come back up here not too long ago was running drugs, one of them old boats. (Laughter.) They caught it up in Cheezam Creek up there in your county, loaded with drugs. Very one, loaded up. But I think what they're doing, they would (indiscernible) 'em and carry 'em down. That's what they were doing with them, a lot of them. Because if they didn't have much money tied up in them, if they lost 'em, they lost 'em. But I don't know, it might be a couple in Tangier that's still active. The Louise Bush is active for a long time, but she sank last year and nobody got her up. She's sifting on the bottom down there. She's got the pilot house on her still on. You haven't been down, have you?

P.L.: No.

F.: You know where it's at?

P.L.: Tangier?

J.F.: No, down here, Joan Marie. Where she sunk at, Louise Bush.

P.L.: No.

J.F.: I'll carry you down if you want to go.

P.L.: Yeah, we should ride down there.

J.F.: Show it to you. She's still there. We can ride down there and take a look at her.

P.L.: A quick look. We know it's your supper time.

J.F.: My supper time? My wife just took off and went to Williamsburg. ~Ne don't never -- you know what time we usually eat? Sometimes we eat 7:00, sometimes we eat 8:00. No particular time. I get up at 4:00 in the morning, I eat my breakfast, I carry my lunch, I bring my lunch back home most of the time, I don't ever eat it. I don't take the time to eat. And then if I get hungry, she'll fix me a bowl of cereal when I first come home. And then we just -- just me and her is all here now. All my kids are gone. So we can go eat if she ain't back, we go somewhere else and eat, soft crabs or something. Soft shell crabs, I

got some soft shell crabs brought home. I might have them for supper. I don't know. She'll come back after awhile. This is my second wife. We've been married 38 years. Second wife. I was married 14 years to my first wife. But this one here is a tobacco girl. Found her in Danville, Virginia. And she never seen a crab, never seen the water in her whole life. And she -- I brought soft crabs home, and I cleaned 'em, and she said I'm not cooking them spiders in this house. (Laughter). But now she loves 'em. And I carried her on the boat with me one day. One night we went trot lining, crabbing. I wanted to go trot lining, and I carried her with me. She'd get up on the cabin, count the crabs, you know, they running dip. I don't know if you know, you know what trot line is?

P.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

J.F.: 'Cause I still got my dip and everything, my line and everything back then. And she would count the crabs. Well this night, we decided to come home, dark. And I'm coming off Newport News Shipyard, and I see this old big -- tug boat coming up there, and he was foaming at the mouth. Great big old sea, you know. And she was sitting back on the stern back there, boy, just lazy, watching the moon. And when that boat went up in the air, that sea, it put the bowel right to the pilot house windows, with water. And I looked, she was crawling. She crawled all the way back up to grab on my legs. Scared the daylights out of her. (Laughter). I didn't let her know what was happening. And, boy, was she scared. Every time she gets around somebody, she'll tell them about that one. She crawled all the way from the stern of that boat up to where I was at, grabbed around my legs. She thought sure we were gonna sink.

P.L.: So she took to the water okay.

J.F.: Yup, she took to the water. She loves the water, and I guess we've had a pretty good life in the water business. I haven't got no fortune, nothing like that. I own my home, and I own my boat. That's -bout it. That's all I got.

P.L.: That's all you can ask.

V.J.: Can I ask you a few more questions about Old Point?

J.F.: All right.

V.J.: You said you lived on it for a week at a time, six days. What did you eat for breakfast?

J.F.: Oh, well most times we'd have eggs, scrambled eggs or sausage, something like that. Most of the time, you know, people kill

a hog, they always get the sausage and tenderloin, stuff like that, bring it aboard the boat. The captain would always bring a box of food every Monday morning. So he'd always have the eggs, or sausage, or bacon or whatever you're going to have. It was all home stuff. It wasn't bought stuff. Be all home. You didn't buy no bacon then. You used to go to somebody's house where they killed the hogs and get a slab of bacon and bring on the boat. And dinner time, like I say, most time we'd have -- sometimes we'd fix up vegetable soup or fix up a pot of navy beans, or a pot of lima beans, like that. And on the way in, if we'd decide we'd have fish, we catch fish that day, we cleaned those and cook them on the way in. Sometimes we'd fry crabs, hard crabs, you know, take 'em and clean 'em and fry 'em, batter 'em up, fry 'em. Just -- food. Everybody got full, and that's only thing counts.

V.J.: What did you drink on the boat?

J.F.: Oh, mostly coffee. Didn't have no drinks. Coffee and water. Didn't carry no bottle drinks in. Not like it is today. All you carry is bottled drinks now. But coffee, more or less. Sometimes we'd have some tea, hot tea or something like that. But just normal food. Most of it, I guess seafood is my main, the main thing we eat all the time is seafood. My wife she'd raise cane with me, I'd have to cut my fingernails every two weeks 'cause they grow so long. She said that's that calcium in seafood, which it is.

V J.: Was there an oven in the stove?

Oh, yeah. We'd make bread. We'd even make pies. We made pies. Made cakes too. I used to -- I used to cook sometimes, and I'd make a cake. I taught my wife how to cook, actually. When we got married, she didn't know how to cook nothing. All she know to open a can and put it into a pot. And I taught her how to cook, actually.

V.J.: How did you learn?

J.F.: I learned from help raise my family, my --my brothers and sisters. I've cooked many a meal in my home, my mother. My mother had the Scarlet Fever, and we had to cook all the food, the kids did. And we and my oldest sister, we cooked all the food. We made cakes, we did this, we made pies, we did everything.

V.J.: What kind of pie?

J. F.: Sweet potato pies. That's only thing. Grow your own. Cut 'em up and make sweet potato pies and coconut. We'd buy coconut then in little packages. Or either buy one whole, crack it, drink the juice out of it and grind the coconut up. And sometimes we'd make pumpkin

pies. 'Cause we had a garden too. We grew our vegetables, like tomatoes and all that, anything. We had a big garden. Had about three acres of garden. You had to have a garden then to survive, more or less. But that's how I learned how to cook. My mother was a great cook, and I learned from her. And then when she had Scarlet Fever, I learned more then. Me and my sister cooked all the food, my dad and everybody.

V.J.: What kind of cooking utensils did you have on the boat?

J.F.: Just regular old cast iron steel pots. Cast iron ones. Not the real steel ones, 'cause everything sticks to them. We used cast iron. Cast iron teapot, cast iron coffee pot, cast iron frying pans, all cast iron, old time ones. I got some in here that I had when I was working my boat, my wife's hung up on the kitchen wall. She don't use 'em no more. Old cast iron frying pans.

V.J.: And what did you use to eat out of?

J.F.: Just regular plates.

V.J.: What were they made out of?

J.F.: Just old glass plates, china. Most of 'em were china. They ain't like today. Most of 'em made in China, china plates. They were good thick plates then. You didn't break them so easy. Plates you get now, you look at 'em, they'll break. But they were heavy-duty plates, and heavy-duty bowls. We had a lot of bowls and coffee cups, real thick coffee cups. Sometime or another, I'll bring in some to you. I got some of them old coffee cups around here.

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

Yeah, crabbing, they got all the same. They tied the boat off same place I am. Yeah, we watch out for one another. If I get broke down, then they'll come get me. If they get broke down, I'll go get them. But I don't get broke down much 'cause I do my own mechanical work. I do my own diesel work. Do my own welding work, do my own -- work. I do all my own work. I hang my own dredge bags, all that. I do it all. You got to learn how to do it all to save money. I can't afford to pay \$45 an hour for a mechanic when I can do it myself. I ordered me two books, sat here and studied them, and I can overhaul a diesel just as good as anybody else can. But that's the only way you can survive in this business.

V.J.: How did you carry drinking water on Old Point?

F.: We had a big wooden keg with a canvas top over top of it, and

we'd fill it up every week. When we'd fuel up, we'd fill that with water. Arid that old wooden keg would keep the water. We'd have sometimes break ice into it and get to the water, but that's an old wooden keg. I got one up, I got a wooden keg -- I got a keg, one of the old beer kegs, old stainless steel beer kegs. I cut a hole in that for mine. I had one years ago. I still got that one. I kept it. I just got a whole garage for the keepsakes.

P. L.: Someday, they'll come in handy.

J. F.: Yeah. The wooden kegs, you don't see none of them no more. They're hard to find. But I'll give you that stainless steel one if you v rant it to go on the boat sometime when I'm -- I'll never use it no more.

P. L.: We're a couple of years away from that kind of stuff.

P: Well you never know. You might get slap-happy and go faster. (' aughter). Any more questions?

T H.: Back to your more recent crabbing experience, crab dredging. Can you tell me how different working the new rig is from the side dredge type?

,'. F.: How different it is?

T. H.: How is it different from what you were used to?

J.F.: Well the side rigs, you had to handle the dredge a lot. Other words, you got to bring it over the side, go from side to side to work it. You got to take a hand shovel, shovel everything back overboard that's no good to you. And it's a lot more work. About 75 percent more work. The stern rig, push a little lever, pull the dredge up on the deck, two of us go back and dump the bags, two of us set the dredge back on the deck, pull a little lever and I set it back overboard. And when it gets down to the bottom, I lock the lever. That's all it is to it. Rut on the side rig, you got to catch that chain to hold it, and put the C.E tch hook into it, and sometimes that break would be slipping, and sometimes it would hit your hand, knock your -- bruise your hands and everything else. It's a dangerous rig.

But if you knew what you're doing, you could handle it all right. But you had to know what you're doing. Weren't very many (indiscernible) work on a rig like that. Because you got to put your hand on top the chain, put the hook on it, make sure. 'Cause you'll snap your hand (-,,very time, snap your wrist. But things like that have just changed a lot. The stern rig is just so much different. I mean it's easy. It's really

easy job. It's not no hard work to it, unless you get in real bad bottom. Real bad bottom, you can put your dredges on the boat, Ca-an 'em, don't have to dredge it overboard. Just hand 'em on the stern, clean the boat and then put them overboard. But on a side rig, you don't do that. You just pull one dredge, pull the other dredge, then you just start it going all the time. It's no easy work to that one. That one's the hardest, that's about the hardest work I ever did in my life, working on a side rig on the Old Point. About the hardest job I ever did in my life. I don't believe I've did any harder work.

1. H.: Do you use the same boat for crabbing in the summer and crab dredging in the winter?

F.: Yeah. My boat's 44 foot and 14 foot wide.

H.: Is that a pretty safe boat, pretty secure boat for working out in ,ii, mouth of the bay?

3. F.: Oh, yeah. Yeah. She's two and a half inches thick, plank board, Juniper. And she's got a 12 by 12 keel into her. And I don't have a (indiscernible), I got a straight keel all the way back. They did away with (indiscernible) many years ago 'cause they couldn't keep from raking, stop leaking, they vibrate so much. Keep 'em from loosening i."o so bad.

P. L.: Usually had a block--

".F.: Yeah, overlap block, and you bolt it down with four one-inch bolts. You don't have to worry about that going nowhere.

P. L.: So yours just goes straight through.

,'.F.: Straight back, and then you got just your block onto it for your shaft to go through, and your shaft goes in, that's all there is to it. A lot easier than what it was. Used to be your (indiscernible) was on, like the Old Point and like that. You don't see them no more. They don't build them no more.

P.L.: What kind of engine's in your boat?

I got a 671. I got the new style 671. And my boys' got 871's in theirs, and one of 'em got 892 Turbo, one of them -- boats. They want speed. I don't go for speed. I go for economics. They burn 100 gallons fuel, I burn 25, 30. Lot of difference. I'm not a speed demon.

I like just to get there. They can go -- I can leave the dock same time they do, and we go out to the bay to go dredging. They'll make one link is all they'll make, and I'll be there. And the done burn 25 gallons more fuel than I have already. So I don't see no need. I don't see no sense in it. So I just take my time.

EL.: I got one last question. How come they use chain instead of wire going to the dredge?

F.: The cable, the cable -- the reason they didn't use cable because when you bring on the rollers and everything on these type spools we (ot, would kink up on you so bad 'cause you're going around in a small area. If you're going in a big, great big drum, you'd use cable all right, but cable is -- nobody ever used cable on a crab dredge. Chain helps dredge too, to keep it to the bottom, a lot of weight there. Three hundred foot of chain on a dredge, if you got overboard, the 300 foot chain weighs about six or 700 pound. It's a lot of weight. And I think i*'s helped hold the dredge down to the bottom too. Cable was light, and it didn't work as good. They tried it, I think, but it just didn't want to work. I just wished I could think of some of the stories, but it's been so long ago. I know a lot of things happened out there, but it's just hard to bring them back.

V.J.: What's the worst meal you ever had on a boat?

J F.: Worst meal?

V.J.: Yeah.

; F.: Well the worst meal I ever had on the boat was the time we got caught in a gale of wind out there, and we tried to cook it, and we had f4 h. And I'll never forget it. My dad, he couldn't keep 'em in the frying i i an. The things -- when we got 'em, it was all just like a bunch of i' hocked-up jellyfish. But that's all we could get, so we ate 'em _ :)yway. But he couldn't keep 'em in the pan. Kept turn 'em over, and they'd fly up, they'd roll over, they'd roll over in balls, fish. But that's about the worst. And cornbread, had cornbread the same night, and that was all up in balls too. We always cooked cornbread with fish. He loved cornbread. And Captain Ernie, that's all he loved. He loved his cornbread. He said cornbread tonight, isn't it? He cooked cornbread just about every night on the way in. And biscuits, we cooked biscuits in the morning. And lots of time, cook enough in the morning keep enough for lunch. Wouldn't have to cook 'em a second t me.

V J.: Did you put anything on the biscuits or the cornbread?

F.: Butter. Carry some butter along and some black molasses, the old, come in a barrel, you know, old black molasses barrel, where you j. t t turn a button and fill up a quart jar. You ever seen any of that?

V J.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

That's good stuff. Take that and put it in a pan, then take it and

put it in your plate. Take a little butter and stir it up, stir it up real good, you know, stir it good and then put it on hot biscuits, it's delicious. And fig preserves. I make my own fig preserves.

P.L.: These are huge fig trees.

I got to cut 'em down they got so big.

P. L.: It must be a little warmer here or something where we are, 'cause our figs won't get bigger than like that tall.

F.: I carried --my brother-in-law lives in Lynchburg. And he got some cuttings off his fig bush, and they are doing great.

P.L.: Really?

F.: They are big too. But this bush, these bushes here are 1976. We had a big freeze. And they was just like they are right now, and it froze 'em, and all of 'em died. Everyone of 'em died down to the roots. Had to cut 'em all down, and they came back, that's the way they came back. Every one of 'em.

P.L.: 1976.

..'_.: Yeah, 1976. I got a walnut tree in my backyard there that I planted five years ago that's got walnuts on it. I mean it's taller than this house. It must be rich soil here or something, or I got a green thumb, one or the other. But everybody says I got a green thumb. Everything I plant grows.

1. L.: Well this all looks great.

±. F.: My wife says I don't understand it. I can't plant nothing that I «es, you can plant anything. I had a peach tree out there last year, but I had to take the peaches off of it to keep from breaking the limbs off. And we, I have a garden in the back too, but it's all gone now. But I =ot a pear tree, three plum trees, two apple trees, a peach tree, fig bushes, walnut tree, two pecan trees, all in this one little yard. I got to "n it down some day. Can't hardly see my house no more for the t-ees.

P.L.: How was crab dredging this past season?

11.1'.: Terrible. One of the worst crab dredging seasons I've ever seen since I've been in business. And I been doing it a long time.

P.L.: How much did you work this year?

I didn't work much. Not last year. Wasn't nothing to work for. I worked the month of December, and maybe two or three weeks in January, February, March. I think I worked three weeks in March, last time in March. But that was all we did. But I think we'll have a record year this year because a lot more crabs this year. A lot better.

Fright now, we're doing better than we did all last year as far as crabbing's concerned. But I think you're going to have a good catch of crabs. This here, all this fresh water run a lot of crabs out of the rivers clown the bay. I think that's going to help us some too. But last year, Eli the crabs stayed inside, never came out, and we couldn't -- we (an't go inside dredging. You have to dredge from Old Point out. So they stayed inside last year, we couldn't get in there to get them. But we used to. Years ago, you'd go all the way up Newport News go crab dredging, but they closed it up. Last year, I mean, last year, five, six years ago now. I don't know why they did it. Nobody knows. They was trying to save crabs, but they didn't save 'em.

P.L.: So does that mean you can't crab north of Old Point?

- Nope. Can't come inside west of Old Point. You know where the bridge comes where 64 goes across there?

P.L.: Yeah.

2.F.: That's the line, the crab dredge line. You can't come inside of Oat. But years ago, we used to crab all the way up Newport News. But they closed it up try to save the crab. But I don't think made much progress of doing that, 'cause all they do is save it for the Maryland boats come down, and the North Carolina boats come in here in April. End fill it full of crab pots and catch the last one and carry 'em on down to Carolina, carry 'em back to Maryland. The State of Virginia gets nothing out of it. And they're saving something. They're not saving anything. Why don't they let the Virginia people catch 'em where they can use 'em. We'll carry out to Maryland. They carry everything to Maryland. Carry everything to North Carolina they catch. I sat on that commission down there, and I told them, I said that's a foolish thing you all ever did in your life to close our roads up for somebody to come catch 'em and carry them to another state. I said you're not saving anything. They didn't want to listen though, so --

L.: -- listen.

F.: So I don't even talk to 'em no more. I got a letter the other day, re to a crab meeting up in Maryland for the bi-state crab committee. I'm on that. I'm on so many committees, it's pitiful. I tell you I hardly ever see my wife sometimes. Sometimes I have meetings just about every day, every night, a meeting to go to. Crab meetings, or fish meetings, or over here down in Norfolk they're getting ready to expand the yellow, and I'm involved in all that mess with the Army engineers and just a bunch of mess I'm always involved into. But I

r joy it, and I'm doing it to protect the boys so they'll have something
t : look forward to. That's the only reason I do it. I could sit right here
&r,d enjoy my life easy and never even go to all them meetings. But
rry boys won't go, so I got to go protect them. Well when you get
r?:?ady for some of the junk, let me know. I'll bring you all I can bring to
you.

f.L.: Okay. I got to stand up.

. F.: You got a back problem too?

P. L.: Yeah, it gets a little stiff.

T. H.: Well thank you very much.

le.: Well I just hope I helped you a little bit.

H.: You certainly did.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)